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ABSTRACT

Inclusion of students with disabilities into schools is mandated by law, but inclusion programs are often overlaid onto the school much as pieces of fabric are appliqued onto a preexisting cloth. Few programs have succeeded in interweaving inclusion into the tapestry of the school. Since research has shown a connection between inclusion and the concepts of social justice and caring, methods to infuse these concepts into school curricula become the focus. One method involves thematic units that link various subjects such as English, science, and child development. Included within the units are projects that focus on individuals with disabilities and their roles in society. Although this method would seem to include an aspect of care, the connection is not specifically addressed. Another suggestion is the establishment of a new course that would include a practicum and extend across the high school years. The course would focus on different topics and infuse the concepts of social justice and caring throughout the various disciplines covered. While this course is interdisciplinary, it is still a class on its own and does not extend across preexisting courses. Since gender differences relative to social justice and caring have been noted, the question emerges: if curricula are refocused to challenge students to explore social justice and caring, with one important outcome being a more sensitive view of those with disabilities, would different approaches designed with consideration of gender differences produce more favorable results? (Contains 35 references.) (TD)

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CURRICULUM REFORM FOR INCLUSION: INFUSING ISSUES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CARING

The passage of PL 94-142 in 1975 followed by the reauthorizations in 1990 and 1997, has led to mandated inclusion of students with disabilities into schools. The types of inclusion are as varied as are the results of its implementation. Most interpretations however, attach inclusion onto the existing school structure. That is, students with disabilities are integrated into existing general education classes using various techniques and personnel. An analogy that may be effective here compares inclusion to approaches used in sewing or fabric construction. Inclusion is often overlaid upon the existing fabric of the school and attached in a variety of ways. This approach which affixes programs, students and even teachers to the existing structure could be compared to the applique technique in sewing which attaches distinct fabric shapes or designs on top of a preexisting and complete fabric surface. In some instances the inclusion program appears to mesh more closely with the existing school programs and may even become part of a kaleidoscope in what might appear to be a quilt of programs, students, and personnel. Few programs however, have succeeded in interweaving or infusing inclusion into the tapestry of the school. A tapestry seems a fitting analogy here since the many diverse threads in this fabric are so tightly woven together to form a whole that their individual uniqueness, while essential to the whole, does not stand out or distinguish them. This presentation will present some ideas about how the inclusion of students with disabilities might be infused or woven into a school's tapestry. Before the specifics can be addressed however, it is important that some background on my research based and philosophical journey is addressed since this will provide a critical foundation for the discussion to follow.

In brief, my interest in this topic began with my doctoral dissertation that explored teen attitudes toward individuals with mental retardation (Krajewski, 1987) and expanded with continued research in this area (see Krajewski & Flaherty, 2000; Krajewski & Hyde, 2000; Krajewski, Hyde, & O'Keeffe, in press). The latest examination of research data focused on differences in attitudes by gender.

The impact of gender on attitudes has long been a consideration in attitudinal research with a substantial number of studies reporting that females maintain more positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities (Fisher, Pumpian, & Sax, 1998; Krajewski & Flaherty, 1998; Krajewski & Hyde, 2000; Krajewski, et al., in press; Eichinger, Rizzo & Sirotnik, 1991; McQuilkin, Freitag, & Harris, 1990). Typically research reports this more positive gender difference and the variable is not further investigated. A few studies examining the effect of gender beyond this cursory review have broadened the knowledge base by suggesting that girls in early grades exhibit parenting behaviors toward their peers who have disabilities (Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, Berryman, & Hollowood, 1992) and that girls may be influenced to participate in some inclusionary programs as a means to receive more adult attention (Kishi & Meyer, 1994). Male attitudes seem to be unexplored in attitudinal research. Two studies have specifically explored male attitudes and their relevance to individuals with disabilities. In a comparison of teen attitudes toward individuals with mental retardation from 1987 to 1998, Krajewski, et al. (in press), reported differences between males and females relative to certain dimensions of attitudes with males remaining both more negative than females and virtually unchanged over the 11 year time span. Kishi and Meyer (1994) reported that male high school students who had earlier participated in an elementary school "special friends" program were "more likely to be high status boys who were more accepting of themselves, more secure, more assertive, and more affiliative toward teachers in comparison to most boys and to the girl participants" (pp. 286).

The lack of research in this area suggests a major void. In light of the inclusion movement and concern for the transition and integration of all individuals with disabilities into society, further exploration of gender differences relative to attitude, may suggest future, more successful approaches relative to both school reform and public policy. Such information may suggest changes in curriculum, teaching strategies, and/or approaches to effect attitude change and hopefully impact behavior. Attitudinal differences evident within the secondary population seem of particular importance. Secondary students, soon to become the neighbors, future employers and/associates of individuals with disabilities will also become part of the voting constituency impacting public policy. Their

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views and attitudes offer insight into not only the success of school programs and curriculum, but into the future of individuals with disabilities in our society as well. Fortunately, research focusing on the secondary population has increased recently (Donaldson, Helmstetter, Donaldson, & West, 1994; Fisher, 1999; Jorgensen, 1998; Krajewski & Hyde, 2000; Krajewski, et al., in press; Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yekta; Hamre-Nietupski; & Gable, 1996; Hughes, Rodi, Lorden, Pitkin, Derer, Hwang, & Cai, 1999).

While there is a paucity of research related to gender differences within the attitudinal literature, exploration of the topic in other disciplines is more productive. A large portion of work related to gender differences extends from the theories of Lawrence Kohlberg (1984) and Carol Gilligan (1977). Kohlberg's theory, the ethic of justice, was developed based on interviews with males and establishes stages of moral development. Gilligan challenged Kohlberg's theory, citing the exclusive use of males in his study sample. She interviewed females about moral dilemmas and suggested that women approach such problems with a "different voice", one she calls the ethic of care. Expanding on the earlier work, Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) determined that men and women use both orientations, but that females are more likely to focus on the care orientation when thinking about real-life moral dilemmas, while males are more likely to focus on the justice orientation. Both Kohlberg and Gilligan have differentiated care and justice by noting that care is typically practiced in the private world of family and friends while justice is best suited to the public world of politics and work. While it is acknowledged that the Kohlberg and Gilligan theories and work have engendered substantial debate and criticism (Brabeck, 1983; Killen, 1996; Pratt, Golding, Hunter, & Sampson, 1988; Skoe & Diessner, 1994), their work suggests connections to issues related to inclusion. Certainly it seems that differences in attitudes toward individuals with disabilities relate to educational reform and inclusion specifically.

A large amount of literature related to increasing positive attitudes toward individuals with disabilities and improving inclusion, includes terms consistent with the Kohlberg and Gilligan literature. Some literature explores the general relationship of social justice to inclusion (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; Gerrard, 1994), while other literature explores its relationship to the classroom (Evans, et al., 1994), or relates it to curriculum (Fisher, Sax, & Pumpian, 1997). Within the special education literature inclusion as a strategy leading to the eventual creation of caring communities is clear (Sapon-Shevin, 1990; Stainbeck & Stainbeck, 1990). Helmstetter, Peck and Giangreco (1994) suggest that integration offers the opportunity for students without disabilities to develop "an ethic of caring and commitment to others" while Kishi and Meyer (1994) caution about the possible limitations of care giving in establishing meaningful relationships between students with severe disabilities and their peers.

Since the connection between inclusion and the concepts of social justice and caring is apparent, the focus point becomes "How can these concepts be infused into the schools curriculum?" It is important at this point to reflect on the analogy established in the introduction that compared inclusion and its implementation to the sewing and/or weaving techniques of applique, quilting, and tapestry. One example of a curriculum modification designed to improve the acceptance of, and presumably the inclusion of individuals with disability, is reported by Donaldson, et al., (1994). This study measured attitudes and level of interaction of general education high school students with students with disabilities following the implementation of a social studies unit of study which focused on developing awareness, understanding, sensitivity, acceptance, and interaction with peers with disabilities. While the activities in the unit clearly included issues that could be related to social justice and caring, the unit itself was added or appliqued and not woven into or infused throughout the curriculum or the school. Contrast this with the reform that Fisher (1999) describes in which the curriculum reform involves school adopted and selected thematic units which link various subject areas, such as English, science, and child development. Included within the units are projects that focus on individuals with disability and their roles in society. Projects include the English Social Justice Project as well as the core reading requirement of Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men, the science class project to develop an adapted seat for a student with disabilities, and focus in the child development class on the birth of child with disability. Approached in this fashion, disability becomes a thread woven throughout the curriculum and inclusion becomes a part of the school tapestry. For other reform ideas, including those not specifically related to curriculum, see Jorgenson (1998).

While its seems that the above examples would also include an aspect of care, the connection is not specifically addressed within that literature. Care and the concept as it relates to schools and education, is discussed by several authors in one of the definitive works on the subject, Who Cares? Theory, Research, and Educational Implications of the Ethic of Care, (Brabeck, 1989). Higgins (1989) who considers justice and care to be connected discusses the establishment of the "just community" within the school as an intervention that establishes the

indivisibility of the two. Perhaps one of the best examples of a theoretical infusion of the concepts is espoused by Noddings (1989) in her suggested broad revision of curriculum. She suggests the establishment of a new course, perhaps to be called, "People: Their Growth, Customs, and Relationships", which would include a practicum and extend across the high school years. Some topics she suggests are: the study of childhood (including related art, poetry and literature, biological and developmental psychology, and cross-cultural sociology), the study of old age including some political aspects, the study of religion and morality including political aspects, and the study of relationships including the diversity reflecting within this topic. While she does not envision the course as being interdisciplinary in the strictest sense because it stands as a class on its own and does not extend across preexisting courses, the course would focus on different topics and include aspects of various disciplines such as history, sociology, English, art, biology.

A common thread through most of the curriculum reform concepts previously described, is the focus on moral and/or character education including broader issues of justice, fairness, and human rights as part of the social studies curriculum. Discussion regarding the infusion of these topics within the social studies curriculum is apparent within the social studies related literature (Balton, 1992; Craig, Leppard, 1993; Lockwood, 1991; Tibbitts, 1996). The temptation therefore, might be to add the focus on social justice and caring to the existing social studies curriculum. This however, does not consider the broader reconceptualization of social justice and caring as natural and integral parts of all curriculum areas. There is another challenge however.

While the Kohlberg and Gilligan work focuses on the gender differences relative to either social justice or caring, other literature focusing on these concepts and their connections to the schools and/or curriculum, does not consider the possible relative gender differences. The synthesis of the two presents an intriguing question. If the school curriculum is refocused to challenge students to explore issues related to social justice and caring (with one important outcome being a more sensitive view of those with disabilities), would different approaches, designed with consideration of the gender differences, produce more favorable results? Certainly this question suggests the need for further research in this area.

It is apparent that professionals in a number of fields including psychology, philosophy, sociology are focused on issues that relate to inclusion. Professionals within the field of education could benefit from extending their views beyond the myopic view of inclusion necessitated by the legal mandates. As is evident in the field of education all too often, approaches are reactionary and thorough exploration of the new idea, theory or strategy is often conducted through hindsight. This focus on the trees instead of the forest excludes not only the valuable voices and views of other professionals, but ignores the creative answers and solutions available within the field itself. Infusing issues of social justice and caring into the curriculum can be a powerful reform movement to prepare all students for a diverse world.

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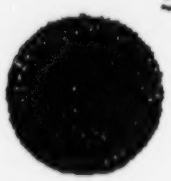

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